

and we have seeds and crops, but we have an administration that ties the hands of our farmers at every turn, particularly the blueberry farmers in Maine.

Blueberries have been exported from Maine since the 1840s, and the people who are in this farming business are tough and resilient. They don't want bailouts; they want to be able to sell their product on the market.

It is a wonderful product, by the way. If you ever have an opportunity to choose between blueberries and wild blueberries, choose wild blueberries. They are better for you, and they taste better.

In recent years, the market for blueberries has been very difficult because of imports from Canada and additional cultivated blueberries from around the country, so our farmers, being entrepreneurial and doing what we have been telling them to do for years, have gone big time into the export market. Where is a great place to export to? China.

I used to say as Governor that if we could get the Chinese hooked on blueberry muffins—just one a day—all of our problems would be over, and the Maine wild blueberries were getting to that point. Two years ago, \$2.5 million a year of blueberries were going to China and half of the budget of the Wild Blueberry Export Commission was going to develop the Chinese market. Hours and hours, days, dollars—a lot of effort went to develop this Chinese market. Then all of a sudden came the Trump administration tariffs.

Not surprisingly—it seems surprising to the administration—but not surprising to anybody who has paid attention to 500 years of trade, the immediate response to those tariffs was retaliatory tariffs by the Chinese, and one of the first ones was an 80-percent tariff on wild blueberries. We were doing pretty well. From 2014 to 2017, exports to China quadrupled to \$2.5 million. This year they are \$61,000. We have the trade war. It is well known that we have tariffs that are applying to all kinds of agricultural products.

The response from the administration was a massive bailout—a bailout which has now reached something like three times the dollar value of the bailout of the automobile industry back at the beginning of the Obama administration when we almost lost that entire industry. We are now heading toward three times that amount. A lot of the bailout to the automobile industry was paid back. This is not a bailout that is going to be paid back. It has continued to just be paid out to various farmers across the country.

I am sure the farmers in the Midwest, just as the farmers in Maine, don't want bailouts. They want sales. They want to sell their product in the market, which they have been doing, but what has happened is we have this bailout, and I call it the farm bailout lottery. I don't have a spinner on here, but it is a lottery because we don't

know and we don't understand and nobody can tell us why certain crops are in and certain crops are out. Round and round she goes; where she stops, nobody knows—and that is the problem. What is in? Well, let's see. Cranberries are in. Blueberries are out—zip, zero, nothing. Soybeans are in. Wheat is in. Apples are out. Here is what else is in, and tell me if this makes any sense: dairy, hogs, almonds, cranberries, ginseng, grapes, cherries. All these are in. These are getting the bailout money. Some farms are getting over \$500,000: hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts but not blueberries and, for some reason, not apples.

We have a double whammy here on this proud industry from Maine. First, there is the Chinese tariff war, of which we are collateral damage. By the way, the same problem is going on with lobsters. They were one of the first products to be retaliated against by the Chinese. We lost that export market, and now the same thing is happening in these agricultural products. It is a double whammy. No. 1, we got hit by the retaliatory tariffs, and No. 2, we are not in on the bailout. We are not in on the funds that are being distributed. Nobody can tell us what the formula is, what the rationale is. Is it who has the biggest, most powerful lobby in Washington? Is it if you are from a State that voted for the President in 2016? What is the rationale? We can't tell what that is.

The President just said yesterday this trade war with China may go on for another year. That means another crop. We have third- and fourth-generation blueberry farmers in Maine leaving the land. It is heartbreaking. These aren't big enterprises. These aren't big operations. These are people with 100-acre farms.

The administration knows about this because I and my colleagues from Maine wrote them in July and asked this question. Wild blueberry should be included in what is called the Market Facilitation Program. It didn't happen. We still don't really know what the criteria is. Just to put a fine point on it, if you are a wild blueberry harvester with a 100-acre farm, you get zip, zero, nada, zilch. If you are a cranberry farmer with a 100-acre bog, you get \$61,000. How is that fair? How is the distinction made? That is the question we are asking.

I have written again today to the Department of Agriculture asking them, A, why we aren't in and, B, how these distinctions are made. I don't think that is an unreasonable question when you are talking about people's livelihoods going back generations. These are tough people. These are resilient people. These are hard-working people. These are people who have given their lives to the land, and they deserve to be supported by their government—not undermined, not challenged, not undercut by their government.

"Inch by inch, row by row, gonna make this garden grow. All it takes is

a rake and a hoe and a piece of fertile ground" and a government that supports your right to make a living at your chosen profession.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I appreciate the Senator from Maine speaking about the virtues of wild Maine blueberries. They happen to be one of my favorite foods—obviously, the lobsters as well.

I agree with him that there appears to be an arbitrary distinction with these support payments that are supposed to compensate farmers for the trade war with China, which I think, unfortunately, is necessary to get China to conform to a rules-based system when it comes to international trade.

Certainly, in the interest of preserving the wild Maine blueberry, I am happy to offer any services I might be able to provide to support our colleagues from Maine.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the weekend, we marked 1 year since the leaders of the United States, Mexico, and Canada signed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. This modern trade agreement will replace the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, which has been the guiding force for North American trade for the past quarter of a century.

When NAFTA was created, its goal was to remove barriers that impede free and fair trade and provide economic benefits to all three countries. By any measure, NAFTA has been an overwhelming success, but a lot has changed in 25 years since NAFTA went into effect, and it is time to bring North American trade into the 21st century. That is precisely what the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement, USMCA, will do. It preserves the hallmark provisions of NAFTA, like duty-free access to Mexican and Canadian markets, and adds measures to modernize the agreement. The USMCA provides strong protections for intellectual property, which is critical to protecting the incredible innovation that Americans do right here at home. It also cuts redtape that is preventing countless small businesses from tapping into foreign markets, and it accounts for e-commerce and digital products, something unheard of 25 years ago, at a time when governments around the world are proposing all kinds of new taxes on e-commerce.

It is actually the first free-trade agreement with a digital trade chapter. That is why a lot of folks call this NAFTA 2.0. It is better. It is stronger. It modernizes the original NAFTA.

We have been told by the experts that the USMCA will lead to increased wealth and jobs here in the United States—about 176,000 new jobs. That is

on top of the 13 million jobs currently supported by trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

It is expected to have a positive impact on every industry sector of the U.S. economy and a more than \$33 billion increase in our exports—things we grow, like wild Maine blueberries, and sell overseas, things we make and manufacture.

This isn't just a win for our farmers, manufacturers, and consumers; it is a win for our entire country. Coincidentally, it is also a big win for Texas. Our State has the 10th largest economy in the world, and it is the engine behind much of our country's trade. In 2018, we exported more than \$137 billion in goods and services to Canada and Mexico. With the passage of the USMCA, that number will go up.

I think the only question left is, When will we get a chance to vote on it? Mexico approved the deal in June. Canada is moving toward ratification soon, so the only remaining hurdle is the green light from Speaker PELOSI and the House of Representatives. We heard early on that House Democrats had some concerns with the agreement, but we were told by the administration—Ambassador Lighthizer, for example—that he thought the negotiations with the House were going well and were being done in good faith. Mexico has made commitments related to some of the labor provisions that were a concern to our Democratic colleagues. President Lopez Obrador even wrote a letter to the Speaker last week affirming that they will fulfill the promises they made. Speaker PELOSI has said repeatedly over the last year that progress was being made and that we are close to a deal and that she hopes we will vote soon. We have heard that over and over and over but still no vote.

Here we are. More than 365 days have gone by since this agreement was signed, and the House still hasn't had a vote. Rather than working to iron out the final details so we can get the USMCA moving before Christmas, the Speaker kicked off the week in Spain talking about the Paris accord and climate change. Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues seem to want to talk about anything and everything other than the priorities we should have in the Congress. Whether they want to be absorbed by impeachment mania or they want to talk about climate change in London, in Paris, they want to talk about anything other than the work that is right here in front of us that we need to get done: things like the USMCA, things like lowering drug prices for consumers, things like an infrastructure bill and improving our highways and bridges, reducing traffic—which we all hate on a bipartisan basis—addressing some of the root causes of the mass violence incidents, including mental health challenges that many people face who are a danger to themselves and others, and things like how can we get people who

should be conducting background checks on firearm purchases—making sure that the laws on the books are being enforced. Those are all things we can and should be doing.

Apparently, that is not the priority for the Speaker. For an entire year now, House Democrats have kept American farmers, businesses, workers, and consumers waiting. With each day that goes by, while the USMCA waits in purgatory, the American people are missing out. We know that the longer this goes on, the closer this gets into the active election season of 2020, the less likely it is that we are actually going to have the bandwidth to get it done. I don't understand why our Democratic colleagues are putting new American jobs on hold. Are they saying we don't need this increased wealth that this trade agreement will bring? Is that really their argument? Are they telling the American businesses that they really don't care about leveling the playing field? Is that the message we are supposed to get from this lack of activity, this inaction?

With House Democrats working overtime in the futile effort to remove the President from office and undo an election, they are squandering what may be our biggest opportunity this Congress. Unfortunately, partisanship has broken out and obstructed bipartisan desire to get our work done, including the USMCA.

I mentioned some of the other things we could and should be doing. A few weeks ago, the minority leader, the Democratic leader, singlehandedly blocked a bipartisan bill that the Senator from Connecticut, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and I introduced that would bring down prescription drug prices. This bill passed—sailed through—the Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan, unanimous vote. Yet, when we brought it to the floor, our Democratic colleague the minority leader, who called this a good bill and well-intentioned, objected to its passage.

Then there is the appropriations process that had been thrown into chaos. In August, we had an agreement on spending caps for the next 2 years. We thought we had overcome the biggest hurdle to getting our work done in order to make sure our military was funded and to make sure that we were meeting the other financial obligations that the Federal Government has to meet, but our Democratic colleagues walked back on the commitment they had made in August over a 0.3-percent disagreement on Federal spending. That is right—0.3-percent of what the Federal Government spends. That is what caused them to backtrack on their agreement. They have now kept our military waiting for the funding and the stability it needs to keep our Nation safe.

They have also defeated, at least temporarily, a bipartisan—nearly unanimous—prescription drug bill that would bring down prescription drug

costs, and it is hard for me to understand why.

I would like to be able to head home for the Christmas holidays with some good news—good news for the Texans who are eager to see the USMCA ratified. Generally speaking, I am a “glass half full” kind of guy, not a “glass half empty,” but I am losing confidence that we will see progress on the USMCA before Christmas. The longer this goes on, the less likely we will actually find the opportunity to get it done.

It seems to me that impeachment mania has consumed this Congress and rendered our colleagues on the other side incapable of focusing on anything other than removing President Trump from office. Time is running out, and I hope the USMCA doesn't become the latest casualty to land in Senator SCHUMER's legislative graveyard.

At some point, we have to put politics aside and do what we were sent here to do, which is to make progress that will benefit the American people. Let's hope we can do that during this holiday season before it is over.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I have just come on the floor and have to chuckle about my friend from Texas in his deciding that it is the minority in the Senate that is holding up legislation that needs to be brought up when we have been coming to the floor every day after Senator MCCONNELL has indicated he is probably the Grim Reaper and after we have indicated very clearly that he has turned this into a legislative graveyard. So I have to smile when I hear the words from my friend.

Let me set the record straight before I talk about what I came to the floor to talk about.

Amazingly, the House of Representatives, even with the challenge that it has in front of it—that it didn't ask for, that it didn't welcome, that was brought to it by the continued abuse of power and other actions of the President of the United States—is fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities. It has passed over 300 different pieces of legislation and has sent them over to the U.S. Senate. It is my understanding that 250 of those bills are bipartisan bills; yet we can't get any of them to be taken up on the floor of the Senate.

We come to the floor every week. I am involved in efforts every week to say: Let's pass the bill that will protect people's pensions. People who have worked their whole lives and are close to retirement or are already retired in my State who have put money in pensions are getting 50, 60, 70 percent cuts in their pensions because they got caught in the financial crisis. When Wall Street collapsed, the big banks were bailed out, but when it came time to bail out the pensions that were invested in those big banks—or the IRAs or 401(k)s—somehow, we couldn't get the Republican support to do that. I

would love to see that brought up. It could be brought up any day. It could be brought up today, and—bingo—we would pass it.

The other thing that we could be doing is passing legislation the House sent us months ago. There is legislation on preexisting conditions. Everybody says we don't want people to lose their preexisting conditions coverage on their healthcare. Great. Let's pass the legislation that came over from the House in order to protect that. Let's make sure that it happens.

There is the Violence Against Women Act, which has been waiting for over 200 days, and there are the efforts on gun safety—things we all agree to. There are issues on gun safety and background checks, and well over 90 percent of the American public agrees with it. This legislation came over from the House months ago, but we can't get any action on the Senate floor. There is legislation that deals with carbon pollution and the climate crisis. It goes on and on and on.

There are over 300 different pieces of legislation that have been passed by the House while it is also having to address what is clearly a constitutional challenge that is very serious for our country. We have not had that in front of us, so we could have easily been bringing bills forward every week that would make a difference in people's lives. We could have been lowering their healthcare costs, lowering their prescription drug costs, making sure people's pensions are protected, focusing on jobs and education and safety for their children while they are in school.

We welcome it. Let's do it today and tomorrow. Let's go. We have over 300 bills that the House has sent to the Senate on which there has been no action.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, let me speak more specifically about healthcare.

I come to the floor every week and say the same thing, which is that healthcare is personal, not political, for each one of us. That is really true in our own families. We want whatever it takes to make sure our children have what they need, that our moms and dads and grandpas and grandmas have what they need, and that we have what we need with healthcare. It is pretty basic. It is a common, human need that we all share. Unfortunately, this has become a political issue here in DC. Nowhere else is it a political issue. It is personal for people in Michigan and around the country.

If a senior can't afford the medication she needs for a chronic condition, that is personal. If parents don't have trusted doctors to call when their children wake up with coughs and high fevers and they don't know what is happening, that is personal. If a woman is charged more for healthcare coverage

than she needs to be just because she is a woman and has detected cancer or if she wants to have it detected early but doesn't have the healthcare with which to do that, that is very personal.

Healthcare for each one of us is something very personal. Unfortunately, the law that helps seniors afford their medications, that provides families health insurance, that covers lifesaving preventive care, and that protects people with preexisting conditions is under political attack over and over.

From the very beginning, the Trump administration has been undermining the healthcare of millions and millions of Americans. It is now open enrollment season, and, unfortunately, the administration is at it again—what it couldn't do here in this body when we voted no. We would not repeal the Affordable Care Act. We would not rip apart the healthcare system. This is what happened right here. It couldn't achieve this through Congress—the legislative body, the people's body—so it is now, through the backdoor, trying to find ways to unravel and rip apart the healthcare system and have costs go up so it can say: See? Look, costs are going up—because of what they are doing behind the scenes to unravel everything.

So here we are. It is open enrollment to sign up for an Affordable Care Act plan, and the administration is at it again. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is using taxpayer funding to promote third-party insurance brokers. I would encourage people to go to the website healthcare.gov. You have until December 15 to do it. There used to be a longer signup time. One of the things the administration has done is to cut back the signup time, but you have until December 15.

When you go there now, though, it is a little tricky, a little confusing. You have healthcare.gov, and then, depending on what button you click, it takes you outside of healthcare.gov, the government system, to private insurance brokers. The insurance brokers are allowed to enroll people in quality, comprehensive plans, which are what the Affordable Care Act provides, and you know what essential services are covered. If they do that, they get paid, but if they sign you up through an insurance company for what we call a junk plan, which doesn't cover anything, then they get paid up to four times more. So they get paid more if you get less coverage.

The problem is it is going to look good because it will probably cost less for many folks, and you will not know what it covers until you get sick. I don't know how many times it was before the Affordable Care Act was passed that someone would call me and say: I have paid into my insurance plan all my life, and I have never been sick. I got sick. What do you mean it only covers 1 day in the hospital? What do you mean it doesn't cover the ambulance? What do you mean I only get two treatments?

That is what we mean by a junk plan—a plan that does not cover what you would expect it to cover in terms of your care. So it is very important that you go to healthcare.gov if this is something that you are interested in, if you need insurance, or if you want to change your plan. It is important that you go into the system, in fact, in which you are going to be given quotes on comprehensive care and in which there is accountability for the coverage.

Late last month, I released a report that outlined the many ways the Trump administration has been undermining healthcare. It has nearly eliminated the funding for what is called healthcare navigators, who are people who can help you sign up for health insurance coverage. It doesn't matter what it is or if you have a lot of questions, as it is complicated; having somebody who can get on the phone to answer your questions and walk you through it is important. Yet the funding for the folks to do that—to help you, to answer your questions—has basically been eliminated.

The administration has slashed the budget for advertising so that people don't know it is open enrollment now. They don't know where they can go to sign up or how many days they have in which to do that and how to do it online.

As I mentioned before, the administration has cut the time in half that you have to sign up.

The worst thing is, any day now, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which is backed by the Trump administration, could announce a ruling that overturns the entire Affordable Care Act. This would take away what we call Healthy Michigan, which is our Medicaid expansion. It would take away the ability for your children to stay on your insurance until they reach the age of 26. It would take away protections for people with preexisting conditions. It would put back into place or allow insurance companies to put back into place caps on the number of treatments you can receive. It would also put back into place all of the other restrictions that insurance companies had on care but that had been eliminated with the Affordable Care Act.

I have to say, recently, when we looked at how this would impact people with the possibility of eliminating the Affordable Care Act in this court decision, we also realized that not only would it take away healthcare for millions of Americans, but it would have the perverted result of actually providing a tax cut to the wealthiest individuals and to prescription drug companies and insurance companies that each chip in to help pay for the tax cuts that average citizens have used in order to get lower cost care.

It seems as though it doesn't matter what it is that our Republican colleagues or this President supports, for it always ends up as another tax cut for the wealthy. Unfortunately, with the